

Southern Tier

Regional Listening Session

November 10, 2015

Good evening. I am Sandra Ruffo, Board of Education Member and President from Broome- Tioga BOCES and the Area 4 Director of NYSSBA representing 75 school districts in 12 counties and approximately 500 school board members.

I welcome you to the Southern Tier and thank you for your commitment to serving on the Common Core Task Force.

During the 31 years I have served on school boards and in my travels visiting the districts in Area 4, I have found universally that individuals serving as BOE members do so for one purpose, and that is taking actions to benefit children while governing under the auspices of our legal authority. We want each student to reach their potential as we prepare them to compete in a global economy. Board members are committed to moving forward after what many have referenced as a misguided rollout of the new standards, coupled with problematic assessments, testing and a new APPR model. I believe however it would be unfortunate to undo all the good that has been achieved. Because the process has been hard and flawed is not reason to totally abandon it. In our area, the majority of educators, and building leadership teams have worked tirelessly to embrace the intent of the new learning standards with an abundance of professional development offered to assist in this process.

These standards present the opportunity for more students to graduate HS ready for college and careers. Tremendous amounts of financial resources as well as personal capital have been invested in embracing the new standards. Our education system is complex, supporting a wide range of children from fiscally and socially diverse communities who possess very different educational needs. We who are actively involved in public education know change takes time. Sweeping results won't be measured in marked numerical improvements from one year to the next. The mere legislation of change is the easy part. It is the implementation that requires the thoughtful planning and public engagement with key players at the table to provide the insights needed for success. The failures of the most recent standards have not been a failure of the standards. We have witnessed amazing successes and opportunities for students since their implementation. The associated failures have been the result of top down imposition of a whole new system, in a hurry up time frame, without the appropriate level of understanding and buy in from all the key players, that of parents, educators, and administrators coupled with threats of punitive repercussions if not enacted quickly. This has cast a pall over early successes. It has resulted in a highly criticized inadequate testing system that has failed to accurately measure achievement in skills, knowledge and abilities. It will require collaborative efforts of the Board of Regents, the State Education Department, Superintendents, building administrators, and teachers to develop developmentally appropriate tests of reasonable length and frequency that will avoid the unintended consequences of narrowing curriculum, teaching to the test, reducing love of learning and

undermining school climate. Educators throughout the state must be included in all aspects of creation of standardized tests. District personnel need to be permitted to examine test results, answer keys and their student's responses in a timely manner so that educators can better assess what each child is learning in relation to what is being taught so that such tests can truly inform instruction. Assessments are a critical part of instruction in order to provide individualized instructional support or greater challenges whichever may be the case.

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